

Growing beyond Survival

Managing symptoms of traumatic
stress

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Defining Trauma

Psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring condition, in which:

- An individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed, or
- The individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity.

(Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995)

How Prevalent is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

- Approx 5% of Americans have PTSD at any given time - more than 13 million people
- Approx 8% of all adults - 1 of 13 people - will develop PTSD in their lifetime
- More common than asthma and diabetes

Trauma in Our Lives

- Up to 70% of American adults experience at least one traumatic event
 - Up to 20% go on to develop PTSD
- Approx. 25% experience multiple traumas
- Responses to trauma vary widely
 - Most people do not develop PTSD
- Research suggests prolonged trauma may disrupt and alter brain chemistry
 - May lead to development of PTSD

Conclusion from Biological Studies

- PTSD may represent failure to inhibit “normal” stress response
 - Person continues to act and feel as if responding to immediate threat of danger - even though event is in past
- Past trauma and psychiatric experience may alter biological stress response system
 - May increase likelihood of such a response
 - Prolongation of stress responses has numerous consequences

PTSD Symptom Clusters

Re-Living the Event	Avoiding Reminders	Hyper-Arousal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Recurring nightmares, flashbacks✓ Intrusive images "pop" into head✓ Extreme emotional or physical reactions to reminders (shaking, chills, panic, racing heartbeat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Avoid places, people, thoughts or other associated activities✓ Emotional numbing, Loss of interest in everyday activities✓ Withdrawal from family, friends✓ "Avoid awareness" that trauma occurred	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Overly alert, easily startled, "on guard" at all times✓ Irritability or sudden anger✓ Difficulty sleeping, Lack of concentration
<i>1 + symptoms present</i>	<i>3 + symptoms present</i>	<i>2 + symptoms present</i>

Co-Occurring Problems

Physical Complaints

- Chronic pain w/ no basis
- Stress-related (chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia)
- GI problems (eg, IBS)
- Eating Disorders
- Respiratory problems
- Headaches
- Muscle cramps, pain
- Cardiovascular problems
- Sleep disorders

Self-Destructive Behavior

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Suicidal impulses
- High-risk sexual behavior, may result in
- Unintended pregnancy
- STDs including HIV
- Other high-risk, life-endangering behavior (e.g., fast or reckless driving)

Psychiatric Problems

- Depression
- Panic or other anxiety disorder
- Dissociation (i.e, losing conscious awareness of “here and now”)

Other Issues

- Low Self-Esteem
- Interpersonal, relationship problems
- Disconnected from own life
- Emotionally “empty” or “numb”

Derailed Development

Self-capacities enable us to cope with and enjoy life:

- Inner connections to others
- Feeling worthy of life
- Ability to manage feelings

Early childhood trauma inhibits the development of self-capacities. Traumatic experiences occurring later in life may overtax self-capacities.

Effects of trauma

- Feelings
- Beliefs
- Judgment
- Frame of reference
- Memory and perception
- Body and brain

Feelings Skills: The Three Self Capacities

- Inner connection to others
- Feeling worthy of life
- Managing feelings
 - Recognizing feelings
 - Modulating feelings
 - Tolerating feelings
 - Integrating feelings



Remember these

Judgment

Denotes a survivor's access to his or her:

- Intelligence
- Insight
- Sense of perspective
- Ability to foresee and weigh consequences
- Interpersonal skills

Beliefs & Psychological Needs

Trauma can disrupt beliefs about self and others in these areas:

- Safety
- Trust/Dependence
- Esteem
- Intimacy/Connection
- Control

Frame of Reference

Framework for interpreting and relating to one's experience, including:

- Identity
 - **inner experience of self and self-in-world**
- World View
 - **life philosophy, moral principles, theories of causality**
- Spirituality
 - **Meaning, purpose, and hope; connection with something beyond the self; awareness of all aspects of experience and of non-material aspects of life**

Memory & Perception

A memory includes:

- Narrative, verbal
- Visual imagery
- Sensory, somatic
- Affective, feeling
- Interpersonal, behavioral

Traumatic memories are encoded or “remembered” in a different way from normal, everyday events.

Dissociation

- A separation of mental processes and contents (e.g., thoughts, images, and sensations) that would ordinarily be connected
- A psychological coping strategy used to protect oneself from overwhelming experiences

Body and Brain

Physical and Biological Effects of Trauma:

- The physiological impact of prolonged stress, terror, pain, and physical neglect goes across systems in the body (autonomic, sympathetic, neurochemical, muscular, skeletal, etc.)
- Trauma affects a survivor's body, gender, and sexuality, and his or her relationship to each

Attachment

- The relational dilemma
 - Connectedness and separateness
 - Attachment and autonomy
 - Autonomy at the expense of attachment

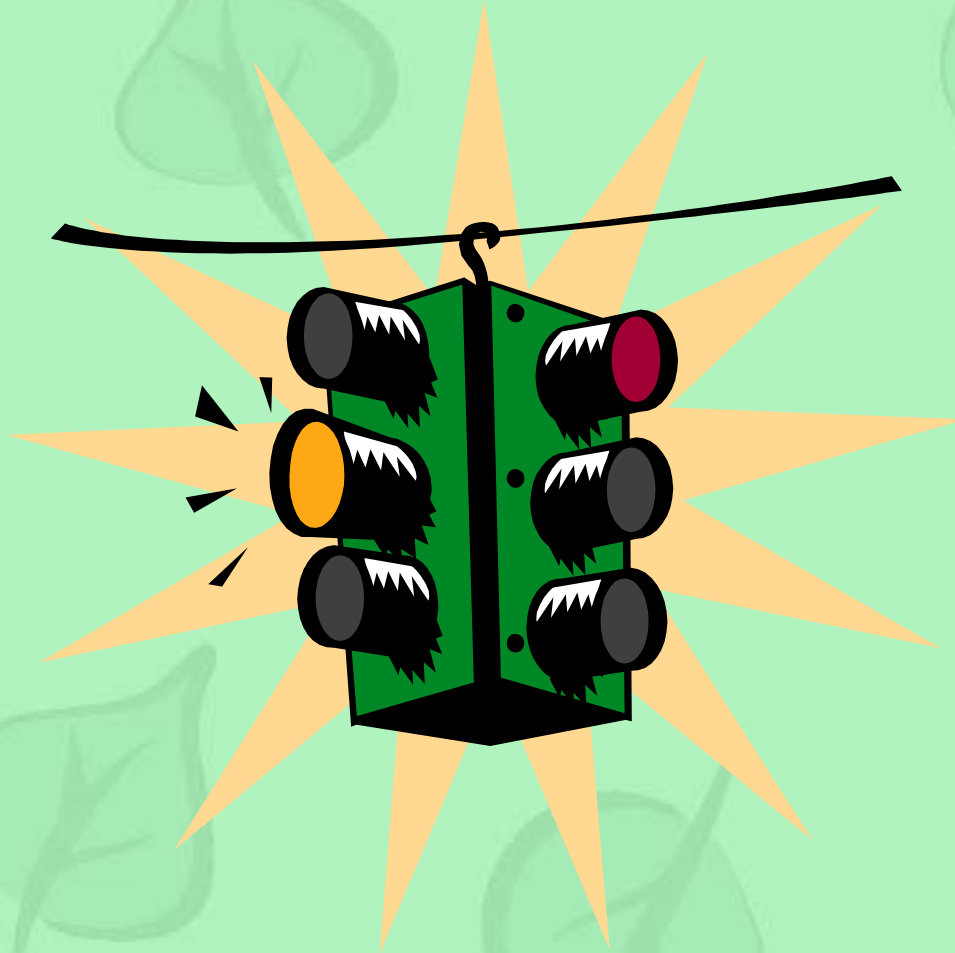
Ask

- How does this help?
- How does this reinforce painful experiences?
- What would *YOU* like to achieve?
- What are our roles? How shall we collaborate?
- Keep it RICH
 - Respect
 - Information
 - Connection
 - Hope
- Get support and supervision.

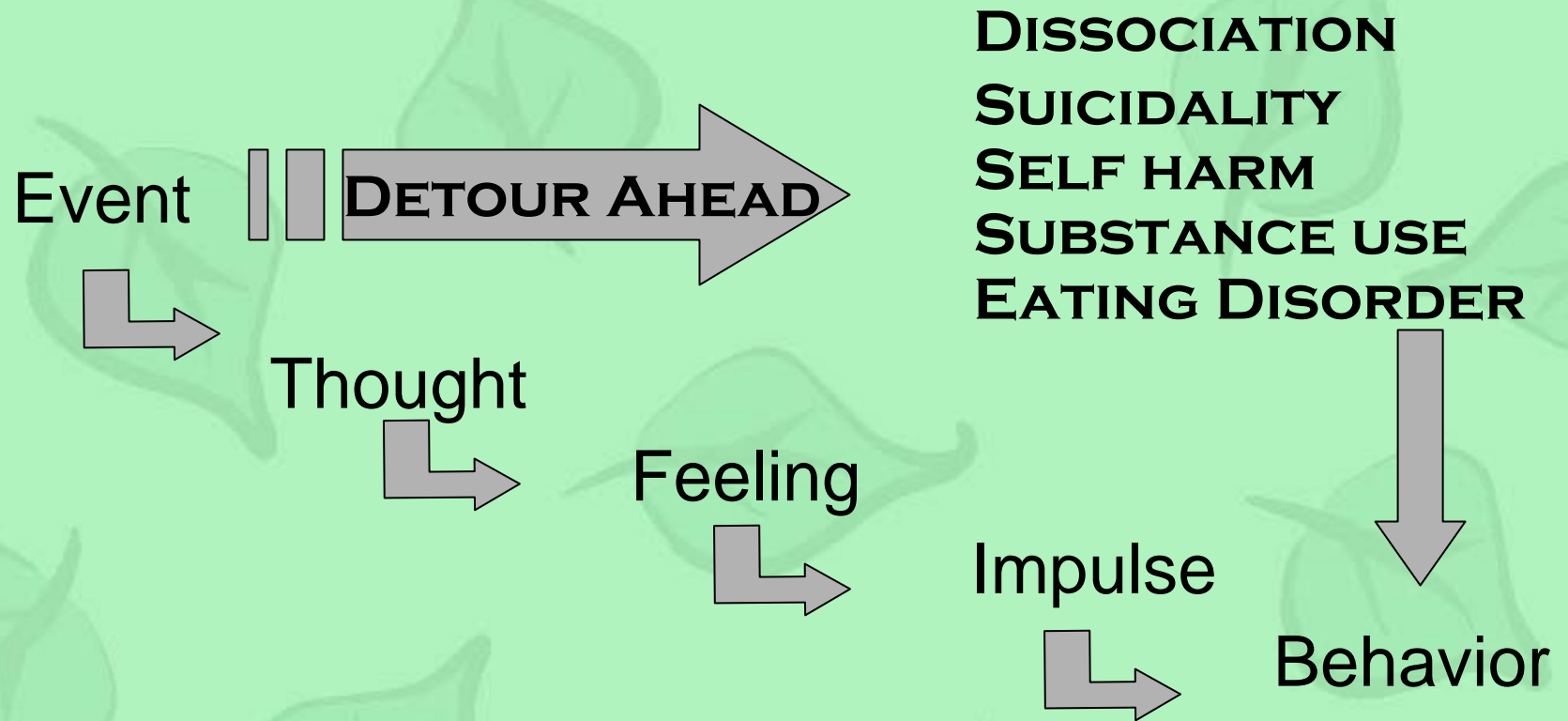
Adaptation themes

- Masking fear/terror but also revealing – telling a story
- Comforting
- Meeting needs
- Making meaning
- Grieving
- Connecting

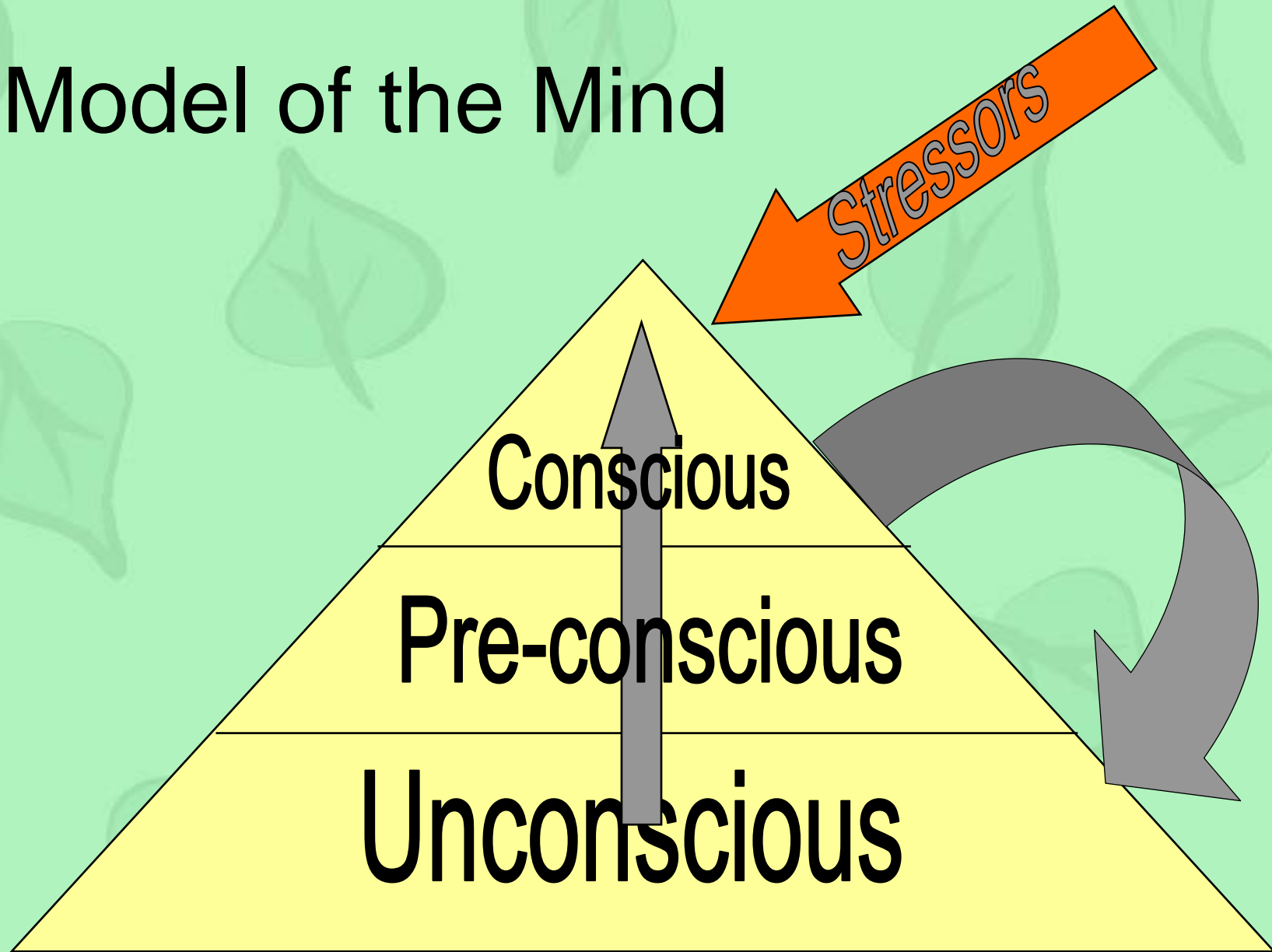
The Creep-O-Meter



The Slippery Slope



Model of the Mind



How Shall We Begin Interventions?

- We will *earn* the right to offer options, to challenge or to confront through:
 - Respect
 - Information
 - Connection
 - Hope

A RICH relationship will promote growth.

Grounding

- Present-focused awareness
- Like mindfulness
 - You can be disconnected, uncomfortable, even spaced out, and KNOW it
 - Be aware of your present condition
- Connect with the meaning of your present condition

Become aware of breathing:

Sight—open your eyes; look around; notice what you see.

Sound—listen for present-day sounds and name them.

Taste—suck on a peppermint; chew gum; drink coffee; use tastes that are soothing and nurturing.

Smell—surround yourself with soothing smells, seek out positive memories through smell.

Touch—notice where you are physically in the world; pet your cat or dog, curl up in your favorite chair; carry a note or small object from someone you love.

Grounding Kit

- Collect small mint tins
- Fill them together with items that are grounding and remind the client of resources
 - Business card, phone card, picture of children or pets, cinnamon gum, tea bag....

Advanced Grounding

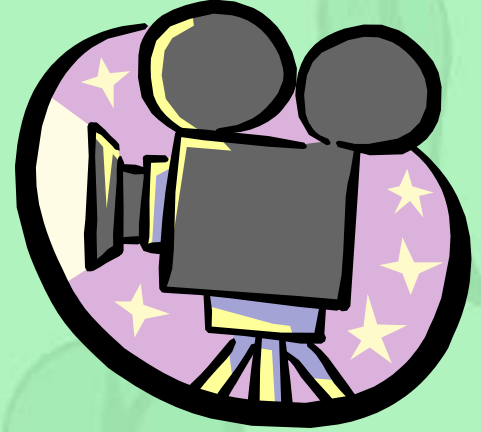
- Developing the ability to identify overreactions and sorting out their bases.
- Choosing how to act/respond based on goals and values rather than on transient feelings.
- Making decisions based on realistic assessment of the current situation

Rachel Downing

More Advanced Grounding

- Developing the ability to step back and self-reflect without judgment
- Learning to expand awareness rather than restrict awareness. Learning to define one's identity in the present.
- Learning to live in the present moment.
- Being able to handle stress and conflict without dissociating, switching, spacing out, avoiding or forgetting.

Imagery



- Using your imagination to self-soothe, work toward a goal, reduce intrusive symptoms, increase feelings of safety, etc.
- Techniques include
 - safe places, The Vacation
 - gauges
 - regulators
 - containers

Advanced Imagery

- Being able to imagine or picture successes, practice, positive outcomes, and benefits.
- Being able to review experiences in your head without avoiding.
- Openness to all possibilities – ability to keep from narrowing vision.

Journal Writing



⌘ Type I - just the facts, events of the day, experiences.

⌘ Type II - dealing with feelings, impulses, working on internal processes, writing about positive experiences, connections with others.

⌘ Type III - working with traumatic material

Journal writing should be structured for safety.

Advanced Communication

- Developing the ability to identify and express emotions.
- Being able to talk through issues in therapy.
- Developing participant/observer skills that aren't journal-dependent.
- Learning to notice, assess belief systems and challenge them.

Art Therapy



- ⌘ **Expressive therapies provide a unique opportunity to support self-expression and containment at the same time.**
- ⌘ **Art therapy should support the ultimate goal of psychotherapy - healing and wellness.**
- ⌘ **Clients should avoid graphic depictions of abuse**
- ⌘ **May be used to express or contain feelings, self-soothe, or just for fun.**
- ⌘ **Be cognizant of the type of media employed - more vs. less structured.**

Relaxation



- Deep breathing
- Yoga or other stretching exercises
- Reading
- Friends
- Bubble baths
- Nature
- Meditation/Prayer

Types of Relaxation

Mental



Psychological



Physical



Advanced Relaxation

- Developing the ability to live a more balanced life.
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Work
- Play
- Sex

Advance Self-Soothing

- Developing the ability to delay (internal pause button) and think through needs and gratification of needs.
- Learning good self-care practices and balance to reduce desperation around self-soothing.

Sleep Strategies

Non-PTSD

- Move through four sleep stages then a REM cycle several times throughout the night

PTSD

- May avoid sleep to avoid nightmares
- REM cycle deprivation
- REM rebound
- Increased likelihood of nightmares

Sleep Plan



- Hygiene
- Relaxing activities
- Limits
 - Accepting phone calls
 - Dealing with bills
- In case of nightmares

Advanced Sleep Strategies

- Reclaiming your space
- Re-working dreams

Relationship between Feelings, Needs and Behaviors

Feeling	Age	Thought	Impulse	Behavior	Need	New Beh.
Anger	4/15	"I hate..."	Break things, self-harm	Sleep self-harm	Guidance vent, support, acceptance, love, TLC, understanding, validation etc.	

Safety

- A growth-promoting relationship is the strongest tool for helping survivors maintain safety.
- What therapist means by safety is not always what a survivor means by safety.
 - Safety is a state not a trait (safe/unsafe people).
 - Safety is a feeling, an emotional reality.
 - Safety is a physical reality.
 - Feeling safe and being safe are not the same.

Safety, PTSD & Dissociation

Unsafe 1 ----- 10 Very safe

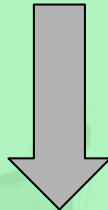
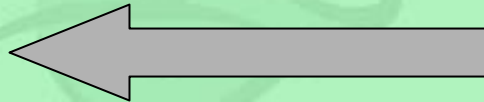
Perceived
Safety

Actual
Safety

PTSD

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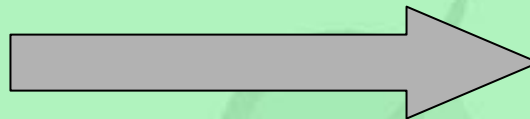
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Diss.

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Managing Safety Issues

- Define safety together.
- Agree on when to use contracts.
- Make a safety plan.
 - Include what you will do to re-establish safety if there is a lapse.

Advanced Safety

- Moving from survival values to recovery values.
 - From secrecy to openness
 - From trusting no one to trusting some.
 - From avoiding new experiences to risking new experiences.
 - From seeing feelings as dangerous to seeing them as valuable.
 - From never being vulnerable to being vulnerable to increase attachment.
 - From avoiding change to learning from change.

Obstacles to Growth

- Societal
- Cultural
- Familial
- Personal

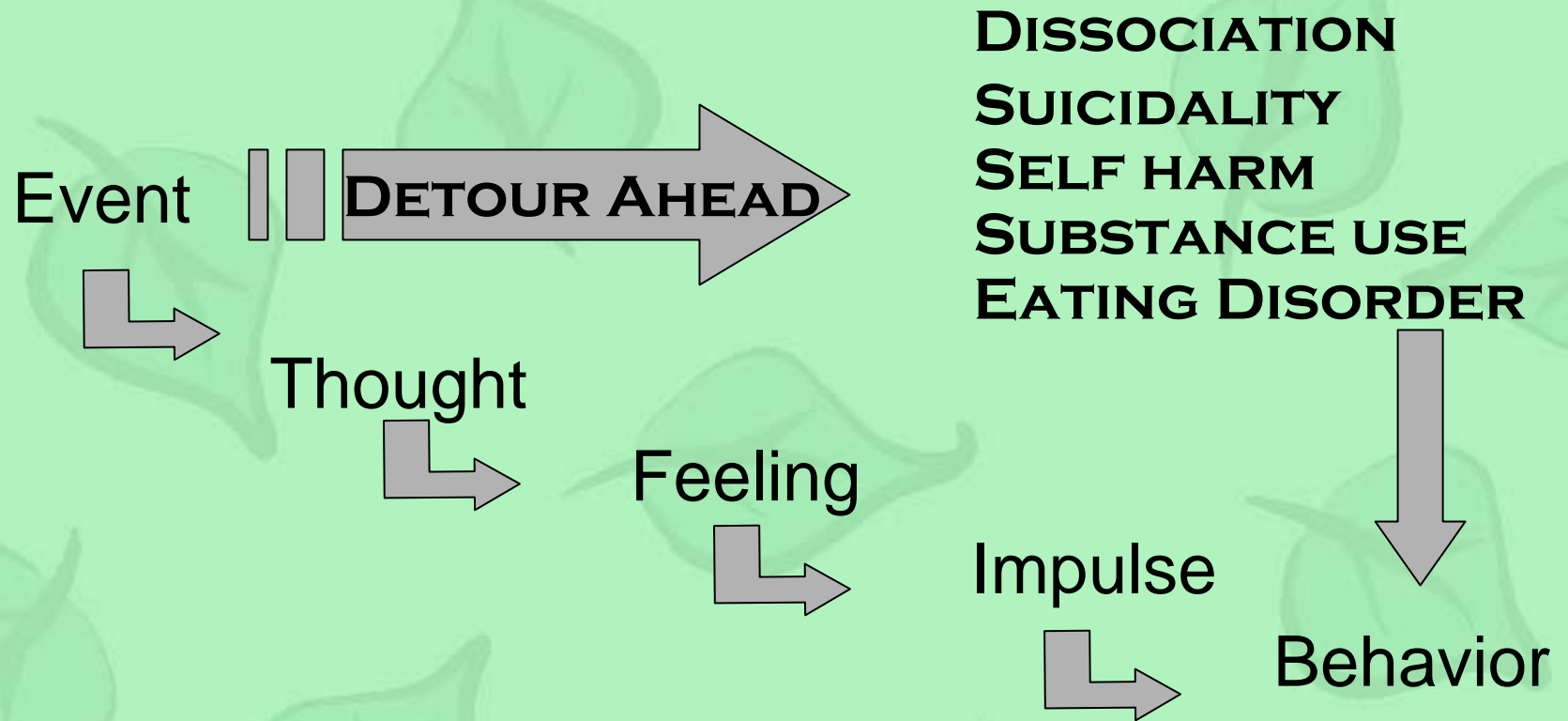
Sources of Strength

- Spiritual
- Community
- Roles/status
- Family
- Personal

Make a Plan

- Acknowledge and list triggers or risk factors
- Identify points of intervention
- Identify interventions that work
- Practice, practice, practice

The Slippery Slope



Managing Impulses

- Identify the need being met by impulsive behavior.
- Identify patterns of impulsivity.
- Identify triggers for impulsivity.
- Reduce episodic desperation.

Tracking Impulses

Event	Thought	Feeling	Impulse	= Behavior
Friend can't go to lunch	"She doesn't care, I can't rely on anyone."	Sad, lonely angry	Go to bar, get drunk, pick up somebody	Go to bar get drunk

The *interpretation* of an event can be the sole determiner of one's emotional and behavioral response.

Regulation of Feelings

Combining skills.

Grounding

Imagery

Expressive work

Talking

Balance

Managing Thoughts

- Combining skills
 - Grounding
 - Challenging thoughts
 - Imagery
 - Talking
 - Observation

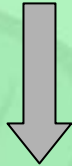
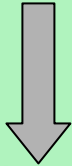
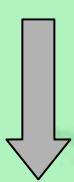
Advanced Thought Management

- Assess and challenge trauma-based beliefs.
- Assess and address the meaning inherent in the beliefs
- Identify goal- beliefs
- Identify ways to practice implementation of new goal-beliefs.

Advanced Feeling Management

- Open up your perspective
- Learn to allow feeling to break like waves while you hold firm in your identity, values and goals.
- Learning to respond from identity versus transient feelings.

Event → Thought → Feeling → Impulse = Behavior



New Responses

Take Home Messages

- Symptoms represent efforts to adapt.
- Symptoms are meaningful.
- Effective symptom management provides a foundation for effective psychotherapy.
- Symptom management may feel worse before it feels better.
- For many, symptom management is the short-term intervention that allows the work of relationship and attachment to begin.
- We have a responsibility to practice what we preach!